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FACTORS IN THE 1944 AGRICULTURAL MANPOWER SITUATION

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The following factors will be important in determining the supply of labor to be available for agricultural production in 1944:

1. The Nation's armed forces may reach a peak strength by the end of 1943 and the manpower needs of the armed forces during 1944 may be limited only to replacements for the attrition occurring through normal and combat causes (discharges and casualties). Prospective inductions from the farm population (for replacements in 1944) can be met from the normal net increase in farm persons of military age, or by limiting inductions to men in military ages living on farms but employed primarily in less essential nonagricultural occupations. The needs of the armed forces are thus not likely to cause any decrease in the number of farm workers in 1944 compared with 1943. There may even be a net gain of farm workers as far as the military factor is concerned if the discharges of men passing the upper age limit or for other reasons result in a return or entry into farm employment.
2. The volume of nonagricultural employment may reach a peak the latter part of this year, leveling off thereafter and remaining at a fairly stable level during 1944, with any expansion in employment in munitions and essential industries being offset by contractions in less essential nonagricultural industries. Necessary replacements of workers in nonagricultural employment will come very largely from new female workers, that is from the net increase in females of working ages and from housewives or other non-worker categories.
3. Net migration from farms will probably decrease substantially in 1944 compared with 1943, and may be reduced to a level comparable with the pre-war 1935-39 average of 550,000 persons of all ages. Important factors contributing to the reduced net migration from farms will be the limited calls of the armed services as well as the relative depletion through the heavy outmigrations in 1940-43 of farm persons in the age groups in which migration is most common. Moreover, the 1944 migration from farms may include a larger than normal proportion of farm residents who have worked in nonagricultural occupations long enough to attain certain skills and to be attracted by jobs in towns and cities calling for skilled or semi-skilled workers. A considerable part of the migration may also consist of females seeking nonfarm employment. For these and other reasons the 1944 migration from farms may include a smaller than normal proportion of actual farm workers.
4. Recruitment, training and placement programs of agricultural emergency workers mobilized through Government agencies and through such means as schools, women's organizations, nonfarm community organizations, etc., may be expected to operate in 1944 in a more effective and coordinated manner than in 1943.

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5. Present prospects are for a net farm income in 1943 of 15 to 20 percent higher than the record level of 1942. Farm wage rates in 1943 may increase by a greater percentage as a result of the high farm income levels of 1942 and 1943 and the greatly restricted farm labor supply. Even if farm prices should level off in 1944, an expanded volume of marketings in 1944 may result in some further increase in farm income and possibly in farm wage rates. On the other hand, industrial wage rates may become stabilized by 1944, and the ratio of farm to nonfarm wages may be more favorable in 1944 than in previous years. More rigid food rationing and further restrictions in important food items will also tend to improve the competitive position of farm wage rates when accompanied by food perquisites. (Wage trends in 1944 are thus also likely to have a stabilizing influence on the hired labor supply available for farm employment.)
6. Manpower controls, particularly through Selective Service, directed toward inducing men deferred for physical or age reasons to shift into essential jobs may tend to maintain or slightly increase the number of adult male agricultural workers in the farm population in 1944 as compared with the number in 1943. The number of male farm workers in 1944 can also increase through greater participation by nonfarm males in seasonal farm work.

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The above considerations point to a general stabilization of the labor supply available in agriculture in 1944 and an improved manpower outlook. The leveling off of losses from the farm population of experienced male farm workers should tend to remove the uncertainties and apprehensions confronted by farmers in planning their production programs under the rapidly changing labor supply conditions of 1942 and 1943. Farmers are going to be called upon, however, to expand production in 1944 over the 1943 level and this will necessitate some increase in the use of women and other farm family members in farm work, with the increase occurring probably at a lower rate than in preceding years. The available labor supply in relation to the production task will continue to call for the most effective use of the manpower available on farms. In this connection the experience gained by farmers during 1942 and 1943 in adjusting their operations and crop programs so as to utilize effectively not only the labor and machinery available on the individual farms, but also the labor and machinery resources in the community, will serve farmers in good stead in 1944. The attainment of higher production levels in 1944 will further be facilitated by the availability of more new farm machinery in 1944 than in 1943, particularly of the types of equipment needed for crops that have been greatly expanded. Extensive programs for supplying seasonal as well as year-round farm workers may be anticipated to be an important factor in the 1944 situation. The net effect of all of these factors may be a farm working force which in numbers and quality will be adequate to meet probable 1944 production requirements.

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